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ABSTRACT

This user guide is part of a multimedia unit using an interdisciplinary approach with hands-on learning to motivate children to participate actively in their schools and local communities, and to experience the democratic process. This unit focuses on the concept of how people living in different neighborhoods and communities work together. Unit parts include: (1) video preview; (2) suggestions for using the unit; (3) getting ready to view the video; (4) video modeling lesson; (5) follow-up activities for primary, intermediate, and upper grade children; and (6) a bibliography for children and teachers. (EH)

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For Grades K-6

Available in English and Spanish

ED 404 262

Neighborhood and Community

User Guide

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My America: Building a Democracy

GOALS

To help children:

- become familiar with the democratic process and active citizenship,
- recognize what it means to be a citizen in a multicultural society,
- build skills in communications and cooperation,
- recognize how laws are made and how a single vote and voice matter, and
- experience how caring and commitment build community.

FORMAT

MY AMERICA is a 12-unit series, consisting of:

- 15-20 minute videos
- User Guides
- Resource Directory Disks (MS-DOS & MAC)

Materials were designed by educators, for educators. An interdisciplinary approach to hands-on learning is used.

EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

The MY AMERICA kits motivate children to participate actively in their schools and local communities, and to experience the democratic process. The series attempts to demystify the government, explain how laws are made, and show how American democracy is always evolving. MY AMERICA combines elements of traditional civics and social studies curricula with techniques and activities that encourage children to participate and become involved. **Its underlying theme is: Democracy works best when everyone participates.**

MY AMERICA teaches in the voices of children in a way that respects their intelligence and natural curiosity.

THE VIDEOS

Each tape contains on-location documentaries, animation and historical illustration. A classroom modeling lesson encourages children to use their skills in reading, writing, listening, painting, singing and performing. The cooperative learning model is central to each video.

Videos are developed within the following framework:

Kid View: Children give thought-provoking, lively opinions on each topic.

Documentary: Historical context and current concerns are blended with examples of children making a difference in their communities. This section is rich in historical information and opens up a wide range of discovery possibilities.

Modeling Lesson: Educators and students develop an interdisciplinary activity designed to bring alive the educational objective of the video.

Wrap Up: The key concept is recapped from the diverse perspectives of both children and adults.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world: indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead

PAUSE POINTS

The videotapes can be used in a variety of ways. Some educators use the tapes to teach three separate lessons on a concept. To facilitate this usage, a blackboard icon comes up between the Kid View, the Documentary and the Modeling Lesson, giving educators appropriate PAUSE POINTS during which to elaborate on concepts.

THE USER GUIDES

Guides provide multiple learning experiences, lesson plans and bibliographies built around social studies and citizenship themes. Suggested activities are interdisciplinary in approach and focus on skills in communication and cooperation.

RESOURCE DIRECTORY DISKS (MS-DOS & MAC)

MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disks include black-lined master activity sheets, samples of letters to parents and organizations, petitions, proclamations and press releases—all of which can be customized. Also included are a listing of additional resources, bibliographic references for students and teachers, historical documents, and curriculum correlations.

This icon 💾 indicates that additional material is available on the MY AMERICA Resource Directory Disk.

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Neighborhood and Community

My America
Building a Democracy

Educational objective:

To illustrate how people living in different neighborhoods and communities work together.

Student concept:

I feel good when I work with and help others.

Video preview

America is a country of diverse neighborhoods. The *Neighborhood and Community* videotape opens with a montage of children living in these neighborhoods—in cities, towns and rural areas across the United States. Then, through a special Native American teaching story, we see how turtles working together saved a young, injured boy in a village. In Delavan, a small farming community of 245 people in Minnesota, we meet adults and children working together to take care of their town. Elementary school children get a bank loan and establish a mini-mall at school, selling items that aren't available in town. A class in another state designs and produces a mural to celebrate the neighborhood. We see how they apply the democratic process to selecting the mural's theme, "Friendship is the Key to Love."

"America, to me, is my home. It's where I live, where I grow up and where I go to school. It's my life."

—Fifth Grader
Washington, DC

Suggestions for using "Neighborhood and Community"

As an Opening and/or Culminating Experience to a Unit of Study: Supplement existing social studies curriculum with the *Neighborhood and Community* video and suggested activities. These resources introduce and engage students in the concept of working together to build neighborhoods and communities that cherish life.

As an Individual Lesson: Use suggested activities to initiate class discussion about the people who work to keep the community a happy and healthy place. These activities help children learn to work together as a unit. They are categorized by activities appropriate for primary, intermediate and upper elementary school children.

As an Assembly Program: To prepare students for viewing the video, have a facilitator elicit ways in which the group has worked together to take care of their neighbors and community. After each response the facilitator asks, "How did it make you feel?" and lists answers on chart paper. This emphasizes how hope exists in communities where people work harmoniously together. Then introduce the video.

My America
Building a Democracy

Neighborhood and Community

"Creating a collaborative mural honors diversity while working together much like the rainbow's seven colors work together to form one glorious bow."

—Indigo
Modeling Teacher
Carl Benner School
Coatsville, PA
The Banner Project

Getting ready to view the video

• Cooperative games give children the experience to share, communicate and work together in a fun, entertaining way. In the spirit of cooperative games, everyone wins and feels accepted as part of a group with a goal. In the Turtle Game, the goal is to get the turtle (individual groups of children) going in one direction.

• Divide the class into groups of eight children. Space is needed, so push back all tables and chairs, use the gym, or go outside. Ask the children to brainstorm what could substitute for a turtle's shell—perhaps a blanket, a large sheet of cardboard, a gym mat or some other material. Each group, in turn, puts the substitute shell over its collective head and moves from one spot to another, focusing on the same goal.

• The video shows children working together to create something that was missing in their community. Ask the children to carefully watch the video and listen for the steps the children take. Brainstorm with the children about what is lacking in their own neighborhood or community. Generate a list of their responses on the board.

• Working toward a common goal requires open-mindedness, patience and good communications skills. The video illustrates how people energize each other when they cooperate creatively. Each story stirs hope for the possibility that children and adults *can* collaborate and care for each other and the Earth.

Key vocabulary: community, city, town, rural, pueblo, trailer park, cooperation, trust, turtle, mural, neighbors, volunteer, banker, borrow, money, loan, cooperation

Video Modeling Lesson: Making a Mural

★Creating wall murals is a way to beautify a neighborhood. To make a mural with your children, first ask them what a mural is and generate a list of responses on a chart. Once a definition emerges, choose a theme for the mural.

★To choose a theme, ask the children to answer the following questions: What do we want to say on the wall? What message do we want to give our community? List all the responses. Ask the children to apply the democratic process and vote for the final theme.

★Choosing a place for the mural also involves the democratic process of discussion, debate and vote. Should the mural be in the classroom, hall, or yard? Be sure to clear the selected spot with the proper authorities.

★Decide how each child will participate in creating the mural. Begin work on a collaborative sketch on large mural or butcher block paper taped to the front blackboard.

★Purchase materials, or get them donated. Set a timetable for production. Prime the selected wall if necessary. Have the facilitator block out the larger forms first. Children can draw in the smaller forms in crayon and paint later. Use the collaborative process throughout.

★When you are done, celebrate! Invite other classes, parents and teachers to an unveiling ceremony.

Modeling Lesson Materials: mural paper, chart paper, crayons, erasers, drop cloths, paint stirrers, good brushes (flat and round in various sizes), small cans for paint, eight gallons of latex, semi-gloss paint for a 8' X 10' wall.

Modeling Lesson Resource: For a detailed lesson plan on collaborative mural making, write to:
The Banner Project
Diamond Rock Road
Phoenixville, PA 19460.
See Bibliography for more information.

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Follow-up activities for primary grade children

★Engage the children in a discussion about the people who take care of a community by asking the following questions: What is a community? What is a volunteer? What do community volunteers do? Who would like to be a community volunteer? What kind of project would you like to do for your city or town?

★Provide the children with toothpicks, clay and construction paper. Ask them to create figures of community individuals who work to keep the air, water and land (soil) clean and healthy. Then ask them to draw imaginary work scenes for each stick figure. Finally, ask each child to stand and describe what the worker is doing to protect these resources.

★Working together to create a flower garden is an experience that provides delight for months. Call or write for a seed catalog. See the MY AMERICA for names of seed companies. Have the children pick out the flower they would like to grow. Make a chart of the height and color of the chosen flowers and the kind of light and soil they need. Take a class walk and look for a spot around or nearby the school that could use a flower garden. Have the children measure and draw a sketch of the area. Design the flower garden together and order the seeds. While waiting for the seeds, prepare the soil by weeding and feeding it with nutrients. When the seeds arrive have the children start them indoors for a few weeks before planting outdoors. Enjoy the flowers! See the MY AMERICA for a seedling activity sheet.

Follow-up activities for intermediate grade children

★Clean and healthy air, water and land (soil) and a feeling of safety are basic to our needs. Divide the class into four groups, one for each of the resources/needs. Ask the children to list who in their city or town is responsible for each resource. Write the mayor if no one knows who is in charge. See the MY AMERICA for a sample letter.

★When the mayor responds, gather the children in their individual groups and help them decide how they could volunteer to care for these resources. Is there a project in or around the school that they would like to initiate? Take a MY AMERICA Earth Team Walk to observe the quality of the air, water and land and living conditions around them. See the MY AMERICA for an Earth Team Walk Check-Off Sheet the children can use to document findings.

★After the Earth Team Walk, gather the children in their individual groups to compare notes. Brainstorm how they can help care for and improve the resource and ask them to write down what they would like to do. Then have the children write letters offering their help and ideas to the community person responsible for each resource. See the MY AMERICA for a sample letter. Finally, each group presents the project they wish to initiate.

"We draw the circle of our family too small."

—Mother Teresa

The MY AMERICA Newsletter publishes active citizenship projects and activities. Send your photos, stories, and videotapes to:

MY AMERICA Newsletter
c/o New Castle Communications
229 King Street
Chappaqua, NY 10514

My America
Building a Democracy

Neighborhood and Community

"We have it in our power to make the world over again."
—Thomas Paine

Follow-up activities for upper grade children

★ Working together to create a cooperative vegetable garden takes planning, patience and communication—the same skills required to work on an active citizen project. Many ways to design a vegetable garden exist: in containers, in raised beds or directly in the ground. In a small vegetable garden, every inch of ground is important. Survey the children and make a list of their favorite vegetables. Take a walk and find a spot for a vegetable garden around the school or somewhere in town.

If no space is available, think about container gardening. Once you choose a sunlit site, clear, feed and prepare the soil. Plant, water, thin out seedlings; and stake the tall plants. Enjoy growing your food. Harvest and share the crop!

★ Divide the children into four groups, one for each resource. Ask them to list the parts of town in which these resources are not healthy. Take a MY AMERICA Earth Team walk or ride to these areas. See the MY AMERICA for an Earth Team Worksheet to list problems.

After the children have seen the areas, ask them to brainstorm solutions, generate a list of ideas, and write to a few of the national organizations that work to improve the environment. See the MY AMERICA for the names, addresses and phone numbers, and a sample letter.

★ Planting a tree is one of the best things we can do for the environment. It is good for the air, water, and soil, and it adds to the beauty and serenity of a community.

See the MY AMERICA Organization Listing for information on the National Arbor Day Foundation's seedling program and resources such as Trees for Life, the America Re-Leaf Program, the U.S. Forest Service and the American Forestry Association.

Find It In The MY AMERICA

- **A listing of each state flower in "Fabulous Facts."**
- **A group activity in "Neighborhood and Community."**

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FOR TEACHERS

The Banner Project creates positive community change through art and cultural programs for children. Through community murals, songs and performance, staff help children see that perseverance and focus on a positive goal are powerful change agents. For detailed lesson plans and other resources, contact The Banner Project, Diamond Rock Road, Phoenixville, PA. 610-935-2633.

Henry Field's Seed & Nursery Co., 415 North Burnett, Shenandoah, IA 51602. Write for a free catalog of vegetable and flower seeds.

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Check the MY AMERICA for additional books, resources and activity sheets.

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LEARNING ABOUT
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MY AMERICA consists of the following program titles:

What Is a Flag?
A Pledge Is a Promise
Neighborhood and Community
Liberty and Justice
What Is an American?
The Story of the National Anthem
What Is a Democracy??
How Our Laws Are Made
Becoming an Active Citizen
Rights and Responsibilities

Teaching in a Multicultural Society (For Teachers)
Parents, Teachers and Community: Working Together (For Parents)

Resources available, AT NO CHARGE, when you purchase the entire multimedia series:
MY AMERICA Newsletter: published three times during the school year.
MY AMERICA Teacher Training Video: 10 classroom activities around civic issues.

"In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

—The Great Law of the Six Nations
Iroquois Confederacy

About New Castle Communications, Inc.
MY AMERICA is published by New Castle Communications, Inc. The company is creating educational materials in video, print and computer software formats. New Castle Communications is committed to designing, producing and distributing multimedia materials that engage children and inspire them to get involved in their classrooms, schools and communities.

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